2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria

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flying in the wind. Two had bows and arrows; two were magicians with winnowing-fan and measuring-sticks to discover by divination where their quarry was; one imitated a dog with a bell on his neck; and there was an old man carrying a pot and a basket to take the meat home.

The party chased the gaur round and round the field. Sometimes they lost it, and then the magicians sat down, fell into trance, measured their sticks, and shook the winnowing-fan. The dog ran round with his nose to the ground; it was a great joke to beat and kick him. After a time they shot the gaur and it rolled over on the ground. The hunters ran to it, patted, stroked, embraced it, congratulated each other; they danced round and round with delight. It was a charming scene and reminded one of the passion for the chase that still dominates the heart of every Muria. The dog fell upon the gaur and began to eat it; it had to be beaten off. Then the magicians ordered the party to pick up the great animal and carry it to a stream where they would cut it up and eat it. But the gaur came to life and chased them away.

In Kuntpadar, the magicians blew into the sambhar's ear to see if it was alive or not. The magicians there were very lively, turning somersaults and shaking their heads in trance. At Palli (Kondagaon) there was an interesting variation. One of the boys—practically naked save for a scrap round his loins—represented the *jiwa* or soul of the gaur. When the animal was injured and lay dying on the ground, its soul came to perform a strange and uncanny dance above and round the body. The boy contorted himself like a wounded worm and twisted and turned in the strangest manner. At last it fell on the body, a sign that the life had after all returned, and the gaur got to its feet and ran away.

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FIG. 145. Sling used in hunting

In other villages I have seen this game take another form. A boy plays the part of cowherd and takes the boys (bulls and bullocks) and girls (cows) out to graze in the jungle. They crawl along pretending to nibble grass and roots. Then the tiger or leopard appears: in Pupgaon he was an almost naked boy whose body was covered with stripes and stars made by applying white earth and charcoal with the splayed end of a castor twig; in Kuntpadar and Markabera I saw a tiger made by tying a boy round and round with strips of bark to represent the stripes, and a large cloth round the head. The tiger

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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Bison Horn Maria

slipped up it. Between his feet is tied another rope which holds them against the tree. He is thus able to get up the tree like a humping caterpillar. A Maria told me that in the evening the people go up the trees 'like a company of monkeys'. When villagers go to drink sago or toddy, they often take with them little leaf-bundles containing dry fish, roasted crabs, red ants or mahua paste.

It is impossible to say how much alcohol is drunk by the Maria. According to the Excise figures in the Dantewara Tahsil and Sukma Zamindari where the population is overwhelmingly Maria, the consumption per 100 in proof gallons is 46.48 and 50.51 respectively. In the Muria Tahsil to the north it is 32.43 in Kondagaon and 58.90 in Narayanpur. Narayanpur, it must be remembered, has a large population of Hill Maria who do not drink rice-beer which may explain why there is a higher consumption of mahua spirit. In the Bison-horn Maria area, there are —according to the Settlement records—about 75,000 toddy trees. The number of sago palms is not known, but is—I believe—considerably smaller.

Mohukum ropes for climbing toddy trees

Illicit distillation was a feature of two at least of the murders. In the last five years 143 cases were detected in the Dantewara Tahsil, 91 in Bijapur, 65 in Jagdalpur as against only 11 in Kondagaon and 18 in Narayanpur. This certainly suggests that the Bison-horn Maria are much more given to illicit distillation than their brethren of the north. But, of course, these figures may only reflect greater energy